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Hurricane Ida strikes Louisiana; New Orleans hunkers down

By Kevin McGill and Jay Reeves

(AP) — Hurricane Ida blasted ashore Sunday as one of the most powerful storms ever to hit the U.S., rushing from the Louisiana coast toward New Orleans and one of the nation's most important industrial corridors.

The powerful Category 4 storm with winds of 150 mph (230 kph) hit on the same date Hurricane Katrina ravaged Louisiana and Mississippi 16 years earlier, coming ashore about 45 miles (72 kilometers) west of where Category 3 Katrina first struck land.

The rising ocean swamped the barrier island of Grand Isle. The hurricane was churning through the far southern Louisiana wet-

lands, with the more than 2 million people living in and around New Orleans and Baton Rouge up next.

"This is not the kind of storm that we normally get. This is going to be much stronger than we usually see and, quite frankly, if you had to draw up the worst possible path for a hurricane in Louisiana, it would be something very, very close to what we're seeing," Gov. John Bel Edwards told The Associated Press.

People in Louisiana woke up to a monster storm after Ida's top winds grew by 45 mph (72 kph) in five hours as the hurricane moved through some of the warmest ocean water in the world in the northern Gulf of Mexico.

Continued on next page



A man takes pictures of high waves along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain as Hurricane Ida nears, Sunday, Aug. 29, 2021, in New Orleans. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

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Continued from Front

Wind tore at awnings and water spilled out of Lake Ponchartrain in New Orleans before noon Sunday. Officials said Ida's swift intensification from a few thunderstorms to a massive hurricane in just three days left no time to organize a mandatory evacuation of the city's 390,000 residents. Mayor LaToya Cantrell urged residents to leave voluntarily. Those who stayed were warned to prepare for long power outages amid sweltering heat.

"This is the time. Heed all warnings. Ensure that you shelter in place. You hunker down," Cantrell told a news conference.

Nick Mosca, out walking his dog Sunday morning before the storm hit, said he'd like to have been better prepared.

"But this storm came pretty quick, so you only have the time you have," Mosca said.

Ida's 150 mph winds tied it for the fifth-strongest hurricane to ever hit the mainland U.S.

Those winds came through Port Fourchon, where boats and helicopters gather to take workers and supplies to oil platforms in the ocean and the oil extracted starts



A news crew reports on the edge of Lake Pontchartrain ahead of approaching Hurricane Ida in New Orleans, Sunday, Aug. 29, 2021. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

its journey toward refineries. The port handles about a fifth of the nation's domestic oil and gas, officials said. Edwards said he watched a live video feed from the port area as Ida came ashore.

"The storm surge is just tremendous. We can see the roofs have been blown off of the port buildings in many places," Edwards told the AP.

Along with the oil industry, Ida threatened a region already reeling from a resurgence of COVID-19 in-

fections, due to low vaccination rates and the highly contagious delta variant. New Orleans hospitals planned to ride out the storm with their beds nearly full, as similarly stressed hospitals elsewhere had little room for evacuated patients. And shelters for those fleeing their homes carried an added risk of becoming flashpoints for new infections.

Forecasters warned winds stronger than 115 mph (185 kph) were expected soon in Houma, a city of 33,000 that supports oil platforms in the Gulf.

Gulfport, Mississippi, to the east of New Orleans, was seeing the ocean rise and heavy rain bands. Empty lots where homes stood before Katrina are still common in coastal Mississippi, and Claudette Jones evacuated her home to the east of Gulfport as waves started pounding the shore.

"I'm praying I can go back to a normal home like I left," she said. "That's what I'm praying for. But I'm not sure at this point."

Comparisons to the Aug. 29, 2005, landfall of Ka-

trina weighed heavily on residents bracing for Ida. Katrina was blamed for 1,800 deaths as it caused levee breaches and catastrophic flooding in New Orleans and demolished oceanfront homes in Mississippi. Ida's hurricane force winds stretched 50 miles (80 kilometers) from the storm's eye, or about half the size of Katrina.

Ramsey Green who is in charge of infrastructure for the city of New Orleans emphasized before the worst of the storm that when it comes to protections against storm surge, the city is in a "very different place than it was 16 years ago."

Water should not penetrate the levee system, which has been massively overhauled since Katrina. But if forecasts of up to 20 inches (50 centimeters) of rain come true, the city's underfunded and neglected network of pumps, underground pipes and surface canals likely can't keep up, Green said.

"It's an incredibly fragile system," he said.

About 150,000 customers were already out of power

as of midday, according to PowerOutage.US, which tracks outages nationwide. Hurricane Ida nearly doubled in strength, going from an 85 mph storm to a 150 mph storm in just 24 hours, which meteorologists called "explosive intensification."

"Ida will most definitely be stronger than Katrina, and by a pretty big margin," said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy. "And the worst of the storm will pass over New Orleans and Baton Rouge, which got the weaker side of Katrina."

The region getting Ida's worst could face devastation to its infrastructure, which includes petrochemical sites and major ports, said Jeff Masters, a former National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration hurricane hunter meteorologist and founder of Weather Underground.

The state's 17 oil refineries account for nearly one-fifth of the U.S. refining capacity and its two liquefied natural gas export terminals ship about 55% of the nation's total exports, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Louisiana is also home to two nuclear power plants, one near New Orleans and another about 27 miles (about 43 kilometers) northwest of Baton Rouge.

The Interstate 10 corridor between New Orleans and Baton Rouge is a critical hub of the nation's petrochemical industry, lined with oil refineries, natural gas terminals and chemical manufacturing plants. Entergy, Louisiana's major electricity provider, operates two nuclear power plants along the Mississippi River.

President Joe Biden approved emergency declarations for Louisiana and Mississippi ahead of Ida's arrival. □



Harrison County W Wittmann Road in Pass Christian, Miss. floods in the early morning of Sunday, Aug. 29, 2021 as a result of the arrival of Hurricane Ida. (Hunter Dawkins/The Gazebo Gazette via AP)

Anxious tenants await assistance as evictions resume

By Michael Casey and Michelle Liu

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Six months after Congress approved spending tens of billions of dollars to bail out renters facing eviction, South Carolina was just reaching its first tenants. All nine of them.

Like most states, it had plenty of money to distribute — \$272 million. But it had handed out just over \$36,000 by June. The pace has since intensified, but South Carolina still has only distributed \$15.5 million in rent and utility payments as of Aug. 20, or about 6% of its funds.

“People are strangling on the red tape,” said Sandy Gillis, executive director of the Hilton Head Deep Well Project, which stopped referring tenants to the program and started paying overdue rent through its own private funds instead. The struggles in South Carolina are emblematic of a program launched at the beginning of the year with the promise of solving the pandemic eviction crisis, only to fall victim in many states to bureaucratic hurdles, political inertia and unclear guidance at the federal level.

The concerns about the slow pace intensified Thursday, after the Supreme Court blocked the Biden administration from enforcing a temporary ban that was put in place because of the coronavirus pan-



In this Jan. 13, 2021 file photo, tenants' rights advocates demonstrate outside the Edward W. Brooke Courthouse in Boston. States have begun to ramp up the amount of rental assistance reaching tenants but there are still millions of families facing eviction who haven't gotten help. The Treasury Department says just \$5.1 billion of the estimated \$46.5 billion in federal rental assistance, or only 11%, has been distributed by states and localities through July. (AP Photo/Michael Dwyer, file)

demic. Some 3.5 million people in the U.S. as of Aug. 16 said they face eviction in the next two months, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey.

“The Supreme Court decision undermines historic efforts by Congress and the White House to ensure housing stability during the pandemic,” Diane Yentel, CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition, said in a statement.

“State and local governments are working to improve programs to distribute emergency rental as-

istance to those in need, but they need more time; the Supreme Court's decision will lead to many renters, predominantly people of color, losing their homes before the assistance can reach them.”

The Treasury Department said this week that just over \$5.1 billion of the estimated \$46.5 billion in federal rental assistance — only 11% — has been distributed by states and localities through July. This includes some \$3 billion handed out by the end of June and another \$1.5 billion by May 31. Nearly a million households

have been served and 70 places have gotten at least half their money out, including several states, among them Virginia and Texas, according to Treasury. New York, which hadn't distributed anything through May, has now distributed more than \$156 million.

But there are 16 states, according to the latest data, that had distributed less than 5% and nine that spent less than 3%. Most, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, are red states, often with tough-to-reach rural populations. Besides South

Carolina, they include Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Iowa, Indiana, Florida, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Mississippi and New Mexico.

There are myriad reasons for the slow distribution, according to the group. Among them is the historic amount of money — more than the Department of Housing and Urban Development's annual budget — which required some 450 localities to create programs from scratch. Getting the money out is also complicated by the fact that checks aren't sent directly to beneficiaries like, for example, the child tax credit.

States and localities have also struggled with technology and staffing, as well as reaching tenants without access to the internet, or small landlords unaware of the help. Some have applications so complicated they scare off prospective applicants or have income documentation and pandemic impact requirements that can be time-consuming.

Efforts to use coronavirus relief money for rental assistance last year faced similar challenges.

“A lot of states are lagging behind,” said Emma Foley, a research analyst with the National Low Income Housing Coalition. “The fact that this many states still have distributed so little is worrisome.” □

Hostile school board meetings have members calling it quits

By Carolyn Thompson

(AP) - A Nevada school board member said he had thoughts of suicide before stepping down amid threats and harassment. In Virginia, a board member resigned over what she saw as politics driving decisions on masks. The vitriol at board meetings in Wisconsin had one member fearing he would find his tires slashed.

School board members are largely unpaid volunteers, traditionally former educators and parents who step forward to shape school policy, choose a superintendent and review the budget. But a growing number are resigning or questioning their willingness to serve

as meetings have devolved into shouting contests between deeply political constituencies over how racial issues are taught, masks in schools, and COVID-19 vaccines and testing requirements.

In his letter of resignation from Wisconsin's Oconomowoc Area School Board, Rick Grothaus said its work had become “toxic and impossible to do.”

“When I got on, I knew it would be difficult,” Grothaus, a retired educator, said by phone. “But I wasn't ready or prepared for the vitriolic response that would occur, especially now that the pandemic seemed to just bring everything out in a very, very harsh way. It made it

impossible to really do any kind of meaningful work.”

He resigned Aug. 15 along with two other members, including Dan Raasch, who wondered if his car and windshield would be intact after meetings.

The National School Boards Association's interim executive director, Chip Slaven, said there isn't evidence of widespread departures, but he and several board members reached by The Associated Press said the charged political climate that has seeped from the national stage into their meetings has made a difficult job even more challenging, if not impossible.

In Vail, Arizona, speakers at a re-

cent meeting took turns blasting school board members over masks, vaccines and discussions of race in schools — even though the board had no plans to act on, or even discuss, any of those topics. “It's my constitutional right to be as mean as I want to you guys,” one woman said. The board moved on after more than an hour, only to be interrupted by more shouting. Board member Allison Pratt recalled thinking that if she weren't already on the board, she wouldn't aspire to be. Pratt said she strives to view issues from the perspective of even the most extreme members of the community, and she has no plans to resign. □

After census, citizens panels seek sway in redistricting

By David A. Lieb

(AP) - The Indiana Citizens Redistricting Commission held numerous public hearings. It produced a report prioritizing redistricting criteria. Soon, the bipartisan panel will cap its work by drafting new voting maps for Indiana's nine U.S. House seats and 150 state legislative districts based on the latest census data. Despite all that work and its official-sounding name, the commission created by a coalition of advocacy groups has no official role in Indiana's redistricting process. The actual line-drawing is being done by the Republican-led Legislature, which could ignore the commission entirely and use its overwhelming majorities to create districts that help the GOP continue to win elections for years to come.

Rather than amounting to a mere exercise in futility, advocates for redistricting reform hope the Indiana commission and similar efforts elsewhere can draw public attention to partisan gerrymandering and pressure the real mapmakers to temper their political inclinations. If that doesn't work, they hope their alternative maps ultimately could be implemented by judges resolving redistricting lawsuits.

"We think our process will produce better maps -- maps that better serve the interests of voters and communities," said Julia Vaughn, executive director of Common Cause Indiana, which helped form the citizens commission.

The once-a-decade redistricting process has ramped up with the recent release of 2020 census data showing how populations have changed in neighborhoods, cities and counties since 2010. U.S. House and state legislative districts must be redrawn to rebalance their populations. But mapmakers can create an advantage for their political party in future elections by packing opponents' voters into a few districts or spreading them thin among multiple dis-



Julia Vaughn, executive director of Common Cause Indiana, speaks during a legislative redistricting hearing as Republican Rep. Tim Wesco, chairman of the Indiana House Elections Committee, looks on at the Indiana Statehouse in Indianapolis on Aug. 11, 2021. (AP Photo/Tom Davies)

tricts — a process known as gerrymandering.

Redistricting can have significant consequences. Republicans need to net just five seats in 2022 to flip control of the U.S. House. After the 2010 census, Republicans who wielded mapmaking power in more states than Democrats used their ensuing edge in state capitols to reduce taxes, restrict abortion and pare back union bargaining powers.

Some redistricting reform advocates believe states can cut down on gerrymandering by shifting the task to independent commissions. Since the last redistricting, voters in Colorado, Michigan, New York, Utah and Virginia have created redistricting commissions — nearly doubling the number of states with them.

Ohio voters approved constitutional amendments that will require majority Republican lawmakers and executive officials to gain support from minority Democrats for new maps to

last a full decade. But that didn't go far enough for some advocacy groups.

A coalition of left-leaning organizations formed the Ohio Citizens' Redistricting Commission, which launched a website, held public hearings and plans to draft maps that prioritize opportunities for minority voters and competitive races. Republicans currently hold a 12-4 advantage in Ohio's U.S. House seats and overwhelming majorities in both legislative chambers. "This commission is modeling what we believe the official process should have done," said Jeniece Brock, vice-chair of the citizens commission and advocacy director for the nonprofit Ohio Organizing Collaborative.

State Senate President Matt Huffman, a Republican, said earlier this month that he was unfamiliar with the citizens commission. Huffman is a member of the official Ohio Redistricting Commission, which held its own series of public hearings last week about

new state House and Senate districts.

When the Indiana citizens commission hosted its hearings, retired software developer Rob Albrecht-Mallinger was eager to testify about his belief that Indiana's districts have stifled competition between political parties — resulting in primaries in which candidates try to appeal to fringe voters.

"We've got the technology of slicing and dicing voters down so well that you can have the appearance of compact reasonable lines," Albrecht-Mallinger told The Associated Press. "Yet you are really tricking everybody into making the primaries one-party partisanship contests, rather than an open election where both parties actually have to appeal to the most number of people."

Republicans held a consistent partisan advantage in Indiana's congressional and state House elections this past decade, according to an AP analysis that identified states where

parties won more seats than expected based on their percentage of votes. Albrecht-Mallinger lives in the state's northwestern 1st Congressional District, a Democratic-held seat that will have to expand geographically because the census showed it is nearly 22,000 residents short of the new population target.

State Rep. Tim Wesco, the Republican chair of the House redistricting committee, didn't directly address an AP question about the extent to which his panel will weigh the recommendations of the citizens commission. But he said in an email that his committee will "consider all feedback" and added that "many citizens shared insightful information" during its hearings. Dan Vicuna, national redistricting manager for Common Cause, said there are efforts underway across the country "trying to shame the legislature into doing the right thing."

But if lawmakers don't adopt citizens' redistricting suggestions, "we think it could be more powerful to judges, who have less of a partisan stake in how these districts are drawn," Vicuna said. Though redistricting commissions are viewed by some as a way to reduce partisanship, that has not always been the case in states that have formally adopted them.

In Missouri, a bipartisan commission responsible for redrawing state House districts deadlocked repeatedly this month over who should be chair. Virginia's new bipartisan commission couldn't agree on a single consultant to help draft maps. Arizona's commission was criticized in May by Democrats for hiring consultants who they asserted had aligned with Republicans and disfavored Latino communities. And a recent decision by Michigan commissioners to hire a law firm that defended Republican-drawn maps elsewhere was denounced by Voters Not Politicians, the group that sponsored the ballot initiative creating the commission. □

US says drone kills IS bombers targeting Kabul airport

By Kathy Gannon, Lolita C. Baldor, Tameem Akhgar and Joseph Krauss

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — A U.S. drone strike blew up a vehicle carrying “multiple suicide bombers” from Afghanistan’s Islamic State affiliate on Sunday before they could attack the ongoing military evacuation at Kabul’s international airport, American officials said.

The strike came just two days before the U.S. is set to conclude a massive airlift of tens of thousands of Afghan and foreign civilians and withdraw the last of its troops, ending America’s longest war with the Taliban back in power.

The U.S. State Department released a statement signed by around 100 countries, as well as NATO and the European Union, saying they had received “assurances” from the Taliban that people with travel documents would still be able to leave the country freely. The Taliban have said they will allow normal travel after the U.S. withdrawal is completed on Tuesday and they assume control of the airport.

At around the same time as the drone strike, Afghan police said a rocket hit a neighborhood near the airport, killing a child. Rashid, the Kabul police chief, who goes by one name, confirmed the rocket attack, and video obtained by The Associated Press showed smoke rising from a building around a kilometer (half a mile) from the airport.

The Taliban described the drone strike and the rocket attack as separate incidents, but residents of the Afghan capital heard only one large blast.

Two American military officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss military operations, called the airstrike successful and said the vehicle carried multiple bombers.

U.S. Navy Capt. Bill Urban, a military spokesman, said the strike was carried out in “self-defense.” He said the military was investigating whether there were civilian casualties but that “we



Afghan people are seen inside a house after U.S. drone strike in Kabul, Afghanistan, Sunday, Aug. 29, 2021. A U.S. drone strike destroyed a vehicle carrying “multiple suicide bombers” from Afghanistan’s Islamic State affiliate on Sunday before they could attack the ongoing military evacuation at Kabul’s international airport, American officials said. (AP Photo/Khwaja Tawfiq Sediqi)

have no indications at this time.”

“We are confident we successfully hit the target,” Urban said. “Significant secondary explosions from the vehicle indicated the presence of a substantial amount of explosive material.”

The strike came two days after an Islamic State suicide attack outside the airport killed at least 169 Afghans and 13 U.S. service members. The U.S. carried out a drone strike elsewhere in the country on Saturday that it said killed two IS members.

President Joe Biden had vowed to keep up the airstrikes, saying Saturday that another attack was “highly likely.” The State Department called the threat “specific” and “credible.”

The Sunni extremists of IS, with links to the group’s more well-known affiliate in Syria and Iraq, have carried out a series of attacks, mainly targeting Afghanistan’s Shiite Muslim minority, including a 2020 assault on a maternity hospital in Kabul that killed women and newborns.

The Taliban have fought against the IS affiliate in the past and have pledged to

not allow Afghanistan to become a base for terror attacks. The U.S.-led invasion in 2001 came in response to the 9/11 attacks, which al-Qaida planned and executed while being sheltered by the Taliban. The Taliban increased security around the airport after Thursday’s attack, clearing away the large crowds that had gathered outside the gates hoping to join the airlift.

Britain ended its evacuation flights Saturday, and most U.S. allies concluded theirs earlier in the week. But U.S. military cargo planes continued their runs into the airport Sunday, ahead of a Tuesday deadline set by President Joe Biden to withdraw all American troops. In interviews with Sunday talk shows, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the U.S. was working with other countries to ensure that the airport functions normally after the U.S. withdrawal and that the Taliban allow people to travel freely.

The Taliban have given similar assurances in recent days, even as they have urged Afghans to remain and help rebuild the war-ravaged country.

Tens of thousands of Afghans have sought to flee the country since the Taliban’s rapid takeover earlier this month, fearing a return to the harsh form of Islamic rule the group imposed on Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001. Others fear revenge attacks or general instability.

The Taliban have pledged amnesty for all Afghans, even those who worked with the U.S. and its allies, and say they want to restore peace and security after decades of war. But many Afghans distrust the group, and there have been reports of summary executions and other human rights abuses in areas under Taliban control.

The shooting of a folk singer in a tense region north of Kabul was bound to contribute to such fears. Fawad Andarabi’s family said the Taliban shot him for no reason, just days after they had searched his home and drank tea with him.

“He was innocent, a singer who only was entertaining people,” his son, Jawad, said. “They shot him in the head on the farm.”

The shooting happened in the Andarabi Valley, for which the family is named,

some 100 kilometers (60 miles) north of Kabul, where the Taliban battled local fighters even after seizing the capital. The Taliban say they have retaken the region, which is near mountainous Panjshir, the only one of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces not under Taliban control.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said his group would investigate the shooting, without providing any further information. The Taliban banned music as un-Islamic when they last ruled the country.

Andarabi played the ghichak, a bowed lute, and sang traditional songs about his birthplace, his people and the country. A video online showed him at one performance, sitting on a rug with the mountains behind him.

“There is no country in the world like my homeland, a proud nation,” he sang. “Our beautiful valley, our great-grandparents’ homeland.”

Karima Bennoune, the United Nations special rapporteur on cultural rights, said she had “grave concern” over Andarabi’s killing. “We call on governments to demand the Taliban respect the #humanrights of #artists,” she tweeted.

Agnes Callamard, the secretary-general of Amnesty International, also decried the killing. “There is mounting evidence that the Taliban of 2021 is the same as the intolerant, violent, repressive Taliban of 2001,” she tweeted. “Nothing has changed on that front.” □

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IS MORE DUSHI

Gaza protesters clash with Israeli troops near the border

By Wafaa Shurafa
Associated Press

(AP)— Hundreds of Hamas-backed activists on Saturday launched what they said was the first in a series of nighttime protests along the Israeli border, throwing explosives toward Israeli forces who responded with live fire.

Organizers said the gatherings, which are to continue throughout the week, were meant to step up pressure on Israel to ease a crippling economic blockade on the Gaza Strip.

"The occupation will not enjoy calm unless the siege on our beloved land is lifted," said Abu Omar, a spokesman for the protesters.

Israel and Egypt have maintained the blockade since Hamas, a group sworn to Israel's destruction, seized control of Gaza in 2007, a year after it won Palestinian elections.

The blockade, which restricts the movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza, has ravaged the territory's economy. Israel has tightened the closure since an 11-day war in May, demanding the return of the remains of two dead soldiers and freedom for two Israeli civilians believed to be in Hamas captivity.

Amateur footage and



Protesters take cover next to fires on fire near the fence of Gaza Strip border with Israel during a protest east of Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, Wednesday, Aug. 25, 2021. Hundreds of Palestinians on Wednesday demonstrated near the Israeli border in the southern Gaza Strip, calling on Israel to ease a crippling blockade days after a similar gathering ended in deadly clashes with the Israeli army. (AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana)

photos from inside Gaza showed hundreds of Palestinians protesters engaged in Saturday's gathering. Some appeared to be throwing explosives and chanting in celebrations as blasts sounded.

The Israeli military said troops responded to the explosives by firing live rounds toward the protesters. It said there were no injuries on the Israeli side.

Gaza health officials said three protesters were wounded by Israeli fire.

Earlier Saturday, Gaza health officials said a 12-year-old Palestinian boy died from head wounds after being shot during a similar demonstration a week earlier.

Another Palestinian man, identified as a member of Hamas' military wing, was also killed in that protest, while an Israeli soldier was shot in the head from point-blank range by a protester. The soldier remains in critical condition.

Hamas-linked operatives

also launched a number of incendiary balloons from Gaza Saturday afternoon, sparking two fires in southern Israel, according to the Israeli fire service.

Israel and Hamas are bitter enemies that have fought four wars and numerous skirmishes since 2007. Israel says the closure is necessary to prevent Hamas from gathering arms while critics say the blockade amounts to collective punishment.

Egypt has been trying to mediate a longer-term

cease-fire that would ease the blockade and appeared to be making progress last week when it pressured Hamas to restrain a border protest on Wednesday.

The following day, Israel said it was easing some of the commercial restrictions on Gaza, allowing vehicles, goods and equipment for rebuilding projects to enter the Palestinian enclave. Israel said the easing could expand further if things remain quiet.

The Israeli government reached an agreement with Qatar on Aug. 19 allowing the Gulf country to resume aid payments to families in Gaza, a move aimed at reducing tensions with Hamas. Israel suspended aid payments in May, saying the move was necessary to ensure Hamas did not benefit from cash injections.

But Saturday night's protest indicated violence could soon escalate again.

At least 260 Palestinians were killed during May's Gaza-Israel war, including 67 children and 39 women, according to the Gaza health ministry. Hamas has acknowledged the deaths of 80 militants. Twelve civilians, including two children, were killed in Israel, along with one soldier. □

Expedition discovers island believed world's northernmost



In this photo provided by Morten Rasch on Saturday, Aug. 28, 2021, a view of the newly discovered island, off the coast of Greenland. A team of Arctic researchers from Denmark has discovered accidentally during an expedition what they believe is the world's northernmost island, located off the coast of Greenland. The yet-to-be-named island is 780 meters north of Oodaaq, an island off Cape Morris Jesup, the northernmost point of Greenland and one of the most northerly points of land on Earth. (Morten Rasch via AP)

Associated Press

(AP) — A team of Arctic researchers from Denmark say they accidentally discovered what they believe is the world's northernmost island located off Greenland's coast.

The scientists from the University of Copenhagen initially thought they had arrived at Oodaaq, an island discovered by a Danish survey team in 1978, to collect samples during an expedition that was conducted in July.

They instead wound up on an undiscovered island further north.

"We were convinced that the island we were standing on was Oodaaq, which until then was registered as

the world's northernmost island," said expedition leader Morten Rasch of the university's department of geosciences and natural resource management.

"But when I posted photos of the island and its coordinates on social media, a number of American island hunters went crazy and said that it couldn't be true," he said in a statement on Friday.

"Island hunters" are known as adventurers whose hobby it is to search for unknown islands.

The yet-to-be-named island is 780 meters (about 850 yards) north of Oodaaq, an island off Cape Morris Jesup, the northernmost point of Greenland and one of

the most northerly points of land on Earth.

The tiny island, apparently discovered as a result of shifting pack ice, is about 30 by 60 meters (about 100 by 200 feet) in size and rises to about three to four meters (10 to 13 feet) above sea level, the university said. The research team reportedly doesn't consider the discovery to be a result of climate change and has allegedly proposed naming the island Qeqertaq Avannarleq, which means "the northernmost island" in Greenlandic.

"No one knows how long it will remain. In principle, it could disappear as soon as a powerful new storm hits," Rasch said. □

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MEDLAB LABORATORIES

Museum chief is only candidate for Estonia's presidency

By Jari Tanner

(AP) — Estonia is gearing up for an unusual presidential election in parliament. There will be only one candidate in Monday's vote, a situation unprecedented since the Baltic nation regained its independence 30 years ago.

President Kersti Kaljulaid's five-year term expires on Oct. 10, and lawmakers in the 101-seat Riigikogu parliament must elect a new head of state to replace her in the largely ceremonial post.

As no further candidates registered by the late Saturday deadline, the director of the Estonian National Museum, Alar Karis, will be the sole contender. Karis, a former state auditor, is the only one who has managed to get support from the required minimum of 21 lawmakers.

Holding a vote with only one candidate has flummoxed the country, and several politicians have called for a complete overhaul of Estonia's complex presidential election system. Some Estonians have even suggested that the small European nation, where the prime minister holds most political power, should abolish the head of state post altogether.

Jaak Joeruut, a former defense minister and diplomat, said in a recent opinion piece that "elections with one candidate belong to the Soviet era. It is unethical, but, strangely enough, legal." Once a Soviet republic, Estonia, a nation of 1.3 million, regained its independence in 1991 and is now a member of both the European Union and NATO. Had the president been directly elected by the people, the liberal Kaljulaid would be seeking a second

term. Estonia's first female president is reasonably popular among the public. But she enjoys little support from lawmakers, reportedly due to her outspokenness about fellow politicians and government policies.

Prime Minister Kaja Kallas' Reform Party and the Center Party — which make up Estonia's center-right coalition government — have endorsed Karis, 63.

Both parties have praised him for his understanding of Estonia's society and see his academic background — he headed the University of Tartu, Estonia's main academic institution — and work as an auditor as substantial strengths.

Tonis Sarts, an associate professor in comparative politics at Tallinn University, agrees with the assessment but noted that Karis is a novice in foreign policy.

"He is probably one of the most well-prepared candidates considering the domestic policy dimension but he hasn't had any practical experience in foreign policy-making and diplomacy," Sarts told The Associated Press.

Karis needs a two-thirds majority, or 68 votes, in parliament to be elected in the secret ballot. The governing coalition has 59 votes, and he is seen as likely to gather the support of at least another nine lawmakers from three opposition parties.

The populist right-wing EKRE party has proposed a candidate of its own, but didn't have enough lawmakers to register him. The conservative Fatherland — a small opposition party — said it agrees with Karis on several issues but gave its lawmakers a free hand in the vote. Meanwhile, the Social Democrats are divided between Kaljulaid and Karis



Alar Karis, a former state auditor and current director of the Estonian National Museum poses for a photo in Tallinn, Estonia, Friday, Aug. 27, 2021. Karis is the only candidate running and he needs two-thirds of lawmakers' votes to be elected. Estonia is gearing up for an unusual presidential vote in parliament Monday, Sept. 30, 2021. There is, so far, only one candidate — a situation unprecedented since the Baltic nation regained independence 30 years ago. (AP Photo/Aron Urb)

but the party has too few lawmakers and allies to propose the sitting president run for reelection. Should lawmakers reject Karis on Monday, another two voting rounds are scheduled for Tuesday. If that fails, the election will be transferred to a special 208-member electoral college who would vote on a new head of state in September. Under Estonia's constitution, the president's role is mostly representing the nation abroad and acting as a domestic opinion leader. □



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PALM BEACH — MedCare's Fit2Fly COVID-19 Testing Centers just completed test number 125,000 since starting testing services at the beginning of the year. With six locations at various resorts on the island and two walk-in locations are at the Cove Mall and near the Courtyard by Marriott Aruba Resort at the Mill, it is one of the largest test centers on island.

MedCare's fit2fly test centers offer your best option for the post vacation COVID-19 test which has been a requirement since January 26th 2021 by the U.S. before returning home. All passengers going to the United States, including U.S. citizens, are required to have a negative (antigen or PCR) COVID-19 test result of a test taken maximum three days prior to boarding the flight, or documentation of recovery from COVID-19. MedCare's testing centers in and close to the hotels provide you with an easy and secure solution.

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NAAT Test

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Just steps away from you

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accommodation. Walk-ins are welcome. It is recommended that the tests are done timely, as the negative test is only accepted if taken up to three days before boarding your flight. MedCare Fit2Fly Testing Center at the Cove Mall is opposite the Holiday Inn and is open every day for walk-ins from 8 AM through 6 PM. MedCare's other location is situated at The Courtyard Aruba Resort, is across the street from the RIU Hotel and is open every day from 8:00 AM until 2 PM.

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Costs and timing

Passengers must be tested with a viral test that could be either an Antigen Test or a nucleic acid amplification test (NAAT), such as the reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (PCR). The price for the Antigen Test is only \$50, and the PCR Test is available, for \$125, The new NAAT will be \$150 (results in 30 minutes.) MedCare offers the easier and substantially cheaper Antigen Test that is acceptable for travel to the U.S. as per the CDC guidelines. Pre-travel testing is not covered by the Aruban visitor insurance. Please contact your insurance company to verify if testing costs are insured. Results are e-mailed to you within 24 hours of testing.

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For your convenience, Medcare also offers private testing at your accommodation/hotel room for a one-time service fee of \$120. This fee covers testing up to 10 people (one appointment, at one location and a specific time). Additional persons will be charged \$10 per person. Regular testing fees applies. □



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SIDS Solutions Platform highlights University of Aruba's Sustainable Island Solutions Program

ORANJESTAD - The Sustainable Island Solutions program at the University of Aruba (SISSTEM) has been identified as one of the highlighted Sustainable Island Solutions by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Nominated candidates were selected on the basis of strict criteria:

- have already passed the proof of concept stage and have been operational for at least 12 months;
- be scalable with a proven strong potential to generate cascading results to improve agriculture and food production, nutrition, livelihoods, health, and the environment;
- have local (community, farmers, fisherpersons, public, government, the private sector, donors) demand-driven characteristics; and
- have strong implications for positively catalyzing food systems' value chains. This, for example, means that solutions in eco-tourism and agri-tourism are also eligible if they use agri-food systems, nutrition, health, and the environment.

The FAO platform will enhance information exchange to facilitate development. It will gather Heads of Governments, UN agencies, and representatives from a wide spectrum of farmers organizations, NGOs, civil society, and innovators to incubate, promote and scale-up home-grown and imported solutions to accelerate the achievement of the agriculture, food, and nutrition-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Small Island Development States (SIDS).

To support the ongoing flow of innovative solutions, a SIDS Solutions Platform will be launched in the Pacific in 2021, and will gradually expand to all other SIDS in the African, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean, and South China Sea (AIMS); and the Caribbean regions. SISSTEM at the University of Aruba (UA) has been identified as one of the forerunners in education for sustainable development in small island states.

The first biennial forum is on the 30 and 31 August 2021. The theme is the identification of locally grown or imported solutions of innovation and digitalization to address the COVID-19 impacts on the economy and to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs related to agri-food systems, nutrition, health, the environment, and climate resilience in SIDS.

The SISSTEM program, that is funded by the European Union as part of the EDF-11 fund, aims to reach a broad range of students from Aruba and from the global community of small island states. Students with a VWO background or HAVO or EPI plus AFY (Academic Foundation Year at the UA) - Sciences track or similar backgrounds are encouraged to apply for the bachelor program that leads to a Bsc. in Sustainable Engineering.

This recognition by FAO constitutes a new step in broadening the reach and impact of the University of Aruba's SISSTEM program. □

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Meeting with the private sector in preparation for the assessment of Aruba in the area of Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT)

ORANJESTAD – On Wednesday, August 25, 2021, Prime Minister held a speech at the Marriott hotel at the Private Sector Stake Holders Meeting.

Prime Minister held a speech at the Marriott hotel at the Private Sector Stake Holders Meeting on Wednesday, August 25, 2021. Aruba National Money Laundering Report Risk Report February 21, 2021. This meeting with organizations in the private sector was in preparation for the upcoming "Mutual Evaluation of Aruba under auspices of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF)". Upcoming Monday, August 30, 2021, to

September 10, 2021, a site visit is planned. All government and semi-government companies working in the field of Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT), worked diligently in preparation for the assessment.

Prime Minister Evelyn Wever-Croes, as Chair of the National AML/CFT Steering Group, witnessed all the efforts into safeguarding Aruba's financial systems against money laundering, terrorism financing, and related crimes. The National Risk Assessment (NRA) commenced in October 2018 under the auspices of the World Bank. The



government of Aruba also organized a "CFATF PRE-

ASSESSMENT TRAINING" in October 2019, attended by stakeholders from private sectors. On March 23, 2021, the government of Aruba published a report of the two Money Laundering National Risk Assessments (NRA). As the Chair of the National AML/CFT Steering Committee, the Prime Minister also approved the reports National Risk Assessment Report, Terrorist Financing (TF) and Proliferation Financing (PF). This meeting is essential for Aruba and for the organization you are representing.

It is for the well-being of Aruba for us to commit ourselves and to continue working together against money laundering and the financing of terrorism as effectively as possible. As Prime Minister and Chair of the AML/CFT Steering Group, I want to sincerely thank you for the work performed by each one of you, and/ or institutions and work fields.

"We must jointly ensure for Aruba to pass the evaluation successfully. The private sector has an essential

role in this challenge. I do understand that in some cases, the application of the standards can be tedious. However, Aruba needs to comply with these standards to maintain a sound international reputation as a country that does not accept money laundering and the financing of terrorism. By standing together, government and the private sector, we can fight money laundering and the financing of terrorism effectively. We hope and trust that we can continue to count on your support next week during the on-site visit and in the future", Prime Minister Wever-Croes emphasized during her speech Wednesday morning. □

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Jacques Rogge, IOC president for 12 years, dies at 79

By Chris Lehourites

LONDON (AP) — Jacques Rogge, who oversaw an era of political and financial stability in the Olympic movement after its worst ethics scandal and pursued a hard line against doping during his 12 years as IOC president, has died, the Olympic organization said Sunday. He was 79.

The International Olympic Committee announced his death without giving details. Rogge's health had visibly declined when he attended Olympic events since his presidency ended in 2013.

"First and foremost, Jacques loved sport and being with athletes — and he transmitted this passion to everyone who knew him," Thomas Bach, Rogge's successor as president, said in an IOC statement. "His joy in sport was infectious."

Rogge, a former orthopedic surgeon from Belgium, guided the IOC through a period of relative calm and prosperity during a term that spanned three Summer Olympics and three Winter Games from 2001-2013.

A three-time Olympian in sailing, Rogge earned praise for bringing a steady hand to the often turbulent world of Olympic politics but also faced outside criticism for not being tough enough on human rights issues with China and Russia. Under Rogge's watch, the IOC took the Olympics to new countries and continents — awarding the first Summer Games to South America (Rio de Janeiro in 2016) and the first Winter Games to Russia (Sochi 2014) and South Korea (Pyeongchang 2018).

Rogge was elected the IOC's eighth president in Moscow on July 16, 2001, defeating four other candidates to succeed Juan Antonio Samaranch, a Spaniard who ran the committee with an authoritarian and imperious style for 21 years. Rogge took office in the wake of the Salt Lake City corruption scandal, in which 10 IOC members resigned or were expelled for receiving scholarships, pay-



FILE - In this Saturday, Sept. 7, 2013 file photo, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Jacques Rogge shows the name of the city of Tokyo elected to host the 2020 Summer Olympics in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The International Olympic Committee on Sunday, Aug. 29, 2021 says Jacques Rogge who led the organization as president for 12 years, has died. He was 79. (Fabrice Coffrini/Pool photo via AP, file)

ments and lavish gifts during the Utah capital's winning bid for the 2002 Winter Games.

Rogge enjoyed a "Mr. Clean" reputation and moved quickly to break with the IOC's tainted and elitist image. Within hours of coming to power, he announced that he would stay in the athletes' village rather than the IOC hotel during the Salt Lake Olympics. (He continued the practice at subsequent games, though he also would stay in the official hotel when he had important meetings).

"He was absolutely the right person at the right time," Norwegian former IOC member Gerhard Heiberg said. "We had a lot of turmoil. We had to get out of that. We had to get another image. He brought stability to the organization."

Rogge's measured, unpretentious style was in sharp contrast with that of Samaranch. While the former Spanish diplomat worked behind the scenes and twisted arms to get what he wanted, Rogge pursued a more democratic, collegial and management-oriented approach. He described himself as a "sober" leader.

After serving an initial eight-year term, Rogge was re-elected unopposed in 2009 to a second and final four-year mandate. He stepped down in September 2013 in Buenos Aires, where Germany's Thomas Bach was elected as his successor.

"I received an IOC in good shape from Samaranch," Rogge said in an interview before handing over to Bach. "And I believe I will leave an IOC in good shape to my successor." Rogge spoke five languages, a big selling point in the multi-lingual IOC. His native tongue was Flemish or Dutch, but he also spoke French, English, Spanish and German.

Rogge presided over Summer Olympics in Athens (2004), Beijing (2008) and London (2012), and Winter Games in Salt Lake City (2002), Turin (2006) and Vancouver (2010).

Salt Lake City came just months after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. Rogge consulted with then-President George W. Bush about security measures for the games, which went off peacefully.

Preparations for the Athens Games were dogged by chronic delays. Beijing was surrounded by controversy over China's record on Ti-

bet, human rights and press freedom.

Human rights groups accused Rogge and the IOC of failing to speak out against abuses in China and Russia. Rogge espoused "quiet diplomacy" and insisted repeatedly that the IOC was a sports organization, not a government or political body.

Rogge said the darkest moment of his presidency was the death of Georgian luger Nodar Kumaritashvili, who was killed in a high-speed training crash hours before the 2010 opening ceremony in Vancouver.

While Samaranch and the IOC were criticized for a perceived laxness on performance-enhancing drugs, Rogge initiated a high-profile "zero tolerance" policy on doping. He doubled the number of drug tests at the Olympics to 5,000, instituted rigorous pre-games and out-of-competition checks and retested samples from previous games to catch cheaters retroactively.

Rogge warned frequently about the threat of match-fixing and illegal betting, setting up a dedicated unit to monitor betting patterns during the Olympics. He applied a hard line on ethics, suspending or forcing

out members implicated in any violations and holding firm to the post-Salt Lake City ban on member visits to bid cities.

Rogge came under fire from Jewish groups for refusing to allow a moment of silence at the London opening ceremony to remember the 11 Israeli team members killed by Palestinian gunmen at the 1972 Munich Games. He did take part in special commemorations for the Israelis outside of the ceremonies. Seeking to contain the size and cost of the Olympics, Rogge instituted a cap of 10,500 athletes and 28 sports for the Summer Games. Still, there were about 11,000 athletes and 33 sports at the Tokyo Olympics that closed this month. He struggled with the thorny issue of cutting and adding sports. Softball and baseball were removed from the program after 2008, while golf and rugby were included for 2016. Wrestling was surprisingly dropped for 2020 in 2012 but was given a second chance and won back its place a year later.

The IOC's financial security strengthened under Rogge's tenure. Revenues from global sponsors grew from \$663 million in 2001-04 to nearly \$1 billion for the four-year cycle through London. Television rights deals raised billions, including a \$4.38 billion deal with NBC through the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The IOC's reserves rose from \$100 million to \$900 million over 10 years.

In a major breakthrough, Rogge signed a long-term revenue-sharing deal with the USOC in 2012. Tensions had festered for years over a previous deal that many Olympic officials felt gave the U.S. too big a slice of TV and sponsorship revenues. Rogge's health declined in the final years of his presidency. He underwent hip replacement surgery in September 2012 and looked a far cry from the youthful, robust man who came to power.

Rogge is survived by his wife, Anne, and their two adult children. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 38 Inert gas

1 Finish a golf hole 39 Borders

5 Crescent's tip 41 Spots

9 Two-faced god

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12 Sports site

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21 Actor Kingsley

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23 Deeply touched

24 Makes rugs

26 "Zip-A-Dee-Doo- —"

29 Piano pedal

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31 Broad st.

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37 West Pointer



Saturday's answer

DOWN

1 Holiday event

2 Irregular

3 Melodies

4 Nicholas II, for one

5 Soup buy

6 Much of N. Amer.

7 Rotate

8 Patio stones

9 Esau's twin

11 Brooklyn team

15 Young lads

19 Wallet bills

20 Fuming fill

22 Place to put in

23 Atlas page of

24 Vacillates

25 Come into view

26 Search the riverbed

27 Concurs

28 Party throwers

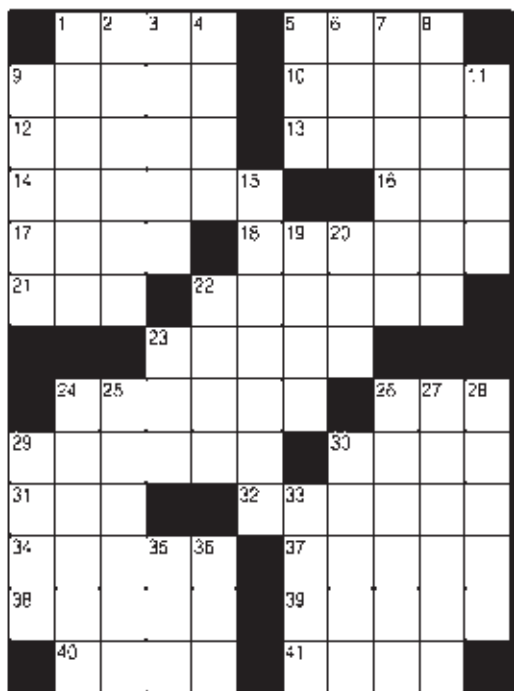
29 Almanac

30 Steer clear

33 High cards

35 Bart, to Homer

36 Finale



8-30

AXYDLBAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

8-30

CRYPTOQUOTE

C P A K U F C A S N V M C T U F U Q

H A M L C I K M L W A W C P A W U L V

C U X E U B B T F X W . — N V M C U

Saturday's Cryptoquote: MY LIFE HAS BEEN A ROLLER COASTER RIDE, BUT SOMEHOW I'VE ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO LAND ON MY FEET AND STILL PLAY THE GUITAR. — ACE FREHLEY

Packed with virus patients, Louisiana hospitals hit by Ida



FILE - In this Tuesday, Aug. 10, 2021 file photo, Dr. Kristen Rogers, left, a hospitalist on the COVID ward, joins Rebecca Russo, an occupational therapist, and Taylor Amedee, a physical therapist, as they assist COVID patient Joan Bronson at Ochsner Medical Center in Jefferson, La. Louisiana hospitals already packed with patients from the latest coronavirus surge are now bracing for a powerful Category 4 hurricane, which is expected to crash ashore Sunday, Aug. 28, 2021. (Chris Granger/The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate via AP, File)

By Rebecca Santana and Melinda Deslatte

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Louisiana hospitals are already packed with patients from the latest coronavirus surge and are challenged by Hurricane Ida, which slammed ashore Sunday as one of the most powerful storms ever to hit the United States.

"Once again we find ourselves dealing with a natural disaster in the midst of a pandemic," said Jennifer Avegno, the top health official for New Orleans.

The storm struck as hospitals and their intensive care units are filled with patients from the fourth surge of the COVID-19 pandemic, sparked by the highly contagious delta variant and low vaccination rates across Louisiana.

Daily tallies of new cases in Louisiana went from a few hundred a day through much of the spring and early summer to thousands a day by late July. Statewide, hospitalizations had peaked at around 2,000 or fewer in three previous surges. But that number peaked at more than 3,000 in August.

Gov. John Bel Edwards said Sunday more than 2,400 COVID-19 patients are in Louisiana hospitals.

"We're in a very dangerous place with our hospitals,"

Edwards told The Associated Press.

He said evacuating the largest hospitals was not an option

"There aren't hospitals with the capacity to take them," Edwards said. "And so making sure that they can maintain power and water, have access to all the things that they need and oxygen and other things is going to really consume a lot of our time and attention because we know that the lights could be out, power could be out for weeks."

He added: "We don't know what the damage is yet, but we're going to start

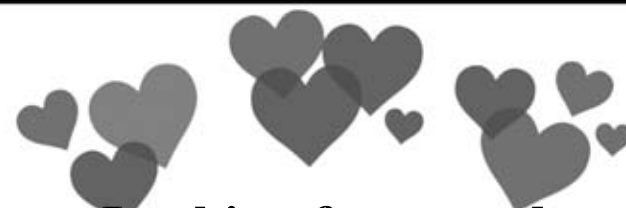
planning to make sure that we have plenty of generators and expertise on hand to try to keep these hospitals operational. You know, and I hate to say it this way, but we have a lot of people on ventilators today and they don't work without electricity."

Officials at Ochsner Health, which runs the largest hospital network in Louisiana, said Saturday that they considered evacuating some facilities closer to the coast but that wasn't possible considering how packed other hospitals are. Roughly 15 of the network's hospitals are in areas potentially affected by Ida. The network evacuated some patients with particular medical needs from small, rural hospitals to larger facilities.

"COVID has certainly added a challenge to this storm," said Mike Hulefeld, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Ochsner Health.

Hulefeld said the hospital network ordered 10 days of supplies for facilities in areas that might be affected by Ida, and everything arrived. Each facility has backup power that was tested and a backup fuel truck on-site. Many of the chain's hospitals also have water wells in case city water goes out.

"We're as ready as we can be," Hulefeld said. □



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Croatia thrilled at summer season success despite COVID-19

By Darko Bandic
Associated Press
DUBROVNIK, Croatia (AP)

— Beaches along Croatia's Adriatic Sea coastline are swarming with people. Guided tours are fully booked, restaurants are packed and sailboats were chartered well in advance. Summer tourism has exceeded even the most optimistic expectations in Croatia this year. Once fearful that the coronavirus pandemic would discourage people from traveling, Croatia's tourism industry was caught by surprise.

"It's much better — it's almost like 2020 never happened," said Josip Crncevic, a tour guide in Dubrovnik, a southern city known for its Old Town and nightlife that is Croatia's most popular destination. The Balkan country experienced four years of war in the 1990s, but before the pandemic had become a top vacation spot for European and American visitors who appreciated its small towns and scores of islands offering natural beauty, local seafood and recreation in comparatively uncrowded settings.

The success of the summer season carries strong implications for Croatia's economy, which is among the weakest in the European Union. Tourism accounts for up to 20% of gross domestic product, and visitor spending is essential to the incomes of locals who rent lodging or run other tourism-linked businesses.

While people here prepared for this year to be better than last because of the advent of COVID-19 vaccines, the tourism minister described the July and August demand for get-aways in Croatia as "remarkable." As of Aug. 10, overnight stays were at 69% of the record number seen in the 2019 season, tourism minister Nikolina Brnjac said.

The tourism revival is clearly visible in Dubrovnik, known as the "pearl" of the coast-

line, famous for its fortified, walled medieval city that is a UNESCO protected area and which served as a set for the popular "Game of Thrones" series. The main street in Old Town buzzes with people as tour groups mill along the outer walls. As a reminder of the continuing risk of COVID-19, a huge sign on one of the stone walls warns people to keep their distance from others, to wash their hands and to wear masks. Wearing a mask is required in enclosed spaces in Croatia, but not outdoors.

Toni Dugandzic, a waiter at the restaurant Gusta Me, said the influx of tourists surprised many town residents and business people following last year's poor season. Restaurant owners didn't expect it and therefore didn't hire enough staff in time, he said. "We work a little bit more because we were not prepared regarding human resources," Dugandzic said. Health officials organized vaccination drives for people with jobs in tourism and kept some crowd limits in place. About 40% of the adult population in the country of 4.2 million has been vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Daily reported cases have increased in recent weeks, reaching nearly 600 late this week. Croatia has reported about 370,000 cases and more than 8,000 virus-related deaths since the start of the pandemic. Some visitors decided the best way to stay safe while on vacation was by renting a sailboat to tour Croatia's islands and isolated bays. Most of the sailboats in the crammed marina in the central Adriatic town of Biograd were already booked.

"Everybody is looking to have a boat!" exclaimed Marin Katicin, the CEO of charter company Pitter Yachting. "We have no boats anymore!"

Kate Redder, a visitor from Germany, chartered a boat with her friends. Sailing around Croatia pro-



Holidaymakers enjoy the weather on a beach in Dubrovnik, Croatia, Friday, Aug. 13, 2021. Summer tourism has exceeded even the most optimistic expectations in Croatia this year. Beaches along the country's Adriatic Sea coastline are swarming with people. Guided tours are fully booked, restaurants are packed and sailboats were chartered well in advance. (AP Photo/Darko Bandic)

vides a feeling of independence, a better view of the country's stunning scenery and a way to self-isolate on the water, she explained. "I think it is just safer than going to a hotel where you meet different people all the time," Redder said. "So you are safe. We are only here as a family and with our skipper." □

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US intelligence still divided on origins of coronavirus

By Nomaan Merchant

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. intelligence agencies remain divided on the origins of the coronavirus but believe China's leaders did not know about the virus before the start of the global pandemic, according to results released Friday of a review ordered by President Joe Biden.

According to an unclassified summary, four members of the U.S. intelligence community say with low confidence that the virus was initially transmitted from an animal to a human. A fifth intelligence agency believes with moderate confidence that the first human infection was linked to a lab. Analysts do not believe the virus was developed as a bioweapon and most agencies believe the virus was not genetically engineered.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence said in a statement Friday that China "continues to hinder the global investigation, resist sharing information and blame other countries, including the United States." Reaching a conclusion about what caused the virus likely requires China's cooperation, the office said.

The cause of the coronavirus remains an urgent public health and security con-



In this July 27, 2021, file photo Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines introduces President Joe Biden during a visit to the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in McLean, Va. China's refusal to fully cooperate with U.S. and international investigations of the virus has hampered reviews of the virus' origins. The Director of National Intelligence said Friday, Aug. 27, that China "continues to hinder the global investigation, resist sharing information, and blame other countries including the United States." (AP Photo/Susan Walsh, File)

cern worldwide. In the U.S., many conservatives have accused Chinese scientists of developing COVID-19 in a lab and allowing it to leak. State Department officials under former President Donald Trump published a fact sheet noting research into coronaviruses conducted at the Wuhan Institute of Virology, located in the Chinese city where the first major known outbreak occurred.

The scientific consensus remains that the virus most

likely migrated from animals in what's known as a zoonotic transmission. So-called "spillover events" occur in nature, and there are at least two coronaviruses that evolved in bats and caused human epidemics, SARS1 and MERS. In a statement, Biden said China had obstructed efforts to investigate the virus "from the beginning."

"The world deserves answers, and I will not rest until we get them," he said. "Responsible nations do not

shirk these kinds of responsibilities to the rest of the world."

China's embassy in Washington hit back with a lengthy statement saying the U.S. had "fabricated" the report and invoking mistaken American intelligence about weapons of mass destruction prior to the Iraq War.

"The report by the intelligence community is based on presumption of guilt on the part of China, and it is only for scapegoating

China," the embassy said. "Such a practice will only disturb and sabotage international cooperation on origin-tracing and on fighting the pandemic, and has been widely opposed by the international community."

Biden in May ordered a 90-day review of what the White House said was an initial finding leading to "two likely scenarios": an animal-to-human transmission or a lab leak. The White House said then that two agencies in the 18-member intelligence community leaned toward the hypothesis of a transmission in nature and another agency leaned toward a lab leak.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence on Friday did not identify which agencies supported either hypothesis. But it noted some of the same hurdles facing the World Health Organization and scientists worldwide: a lack of clinical samples and data from the earliest cases of COVID-19.

In conducting the review, intelligence agencies consulted with allied nations and experts outside of government. An epidemiologist was brought into the National Intelligence Council, a group of senior experts that consults the head of the intelligence community. □

SpaceX launches ants, avocados, robot to space station



This long exposure photo shows the launch of a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket on a resupply mission for NASA to the International Space Station from Pad 39A at Kennedy Space Center, seen from Merritt Island, Fla., Sunday, Aug. 29, 2021. The SpaceX shipment of ants, avocados and a human-sized robotic arm rocketed toward the International Space Station on Sunday. (Malcolm Denmark/Florida Today via AP)

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A SpaceX shipment of ants, avocados and a human-sized robotic arm rocketed toward the International Space Station on Sunday.

The delivery — due to arrive Monday — is the company's 23rd for NASA in just under a decade.

A recycled Falcon rocket blasted into the predawn sky from NASA's Kennedy Space Center. After hoisting the Dragon capsule, the first-stage booster landed upright on SpaceX's newest ocean platform, named "A Shortfall of Gravitas." SpaceX founder

Elon Musk continued his tradition of naming the booster-recovery vessels in tribute to the late science fiction writer Iain Banks and his Culture series.

The Dragon is carrying more than 4,800 pounds (2,170 kilograms) of supplies and experiments, and fresh food including avocados, lemons and even ice cream for the space station's seven astronauts. The Girl Scouts are sending up ants, brine shrimp and plants as test subjects, while University of Wisconsin-Madison scientists are flying up seeds from mouse-ear cress, a small flowering

weed used in genetic research. Samples of concrete, solar cells and other materials also will be subjected to weightlessness.

A Japanese start-up company's experimental robotic arm, meanwhile, will attempt to screw items together in its orbital debut and perform other mundane chores normally done by astronauts. The first tests will be done inside the space station. Future models of Gitai Inc.'s robot will venture out into the vacuum of space to practice satellite and other repair jobs, said chief technology officer Toyotaka Kozuki. □

Verstappen wins rain-marred Belgian GP after short restart

By Jerome Pugmire

SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS, Belgium (AP) — Max Verstappen won a rain-soaked Belgian Grand Prix when it was finally called off Sunday after it restarted under a safety car nearly three hours later than its scheduled time.

The race was shortened to last one hour with only half points awarded to the winner, who needed to complete only two laps to earn points.

"Now, in hindsight, it was important to get the pole position," Red Bull driver Verstappen said. "But it was a shame not to do proper laps."

He was leading from Williams driver George Russell and Mercedes star Lewis Hamilton on Lap 4 when the restarted race ended after roughly 10 minutes with rain still lashing down. "Of course it's a win but not how you want to win," Verstappen said. "Credit to all the fans who stayed here for so long. They are the real winners today."

Verstappen's sixth win of the season was the 16th of his career and stopped Hamilton earning a record-extending 100th win, while also trimming his overall lead from eight points to three.

Verstappen collected 12.5 points instead of 25, with Russell getting nine for his second career podium and Hamilton picking up 7.5.

Fans cheered loudly from the stands and the hills around the track when it was announced the race would start again at 6:17 p.m. local time (1617 GMT) — 3 hours, 17 minutes after it normally would have.

But after just 10 minutes of Verstappen rolling cautiously behind the safety car it was suspended for a second time at just before 6:30 p.m.

"I really hope the fans get their money back today," Hamilton said. "They were incredible."

The first time the race was suspended was shortly after 3:30 p.m. local time following a formation lap.

The 7-kilometer (4.3-mile)

Spa-Francorchamps circuit was totally drenched. Soaked fans huddled under large umbrellas on muddy banks as they waited for the worst of the rain to pass. The thick clouds and mist hanging over the Ardennes forest also gave the circuit a daunting look and made for poor visibility. When the drivers embarked on their formation laps the first time around, several complained.

"I really can't see anything," said Hamilton, who was chasing a fifth win at the track.

The decision to suspend the start was made a few moments later.

"It's wet, but I think it's fine to race," said Verstappen who started from pole for the sixth time this season



First place, Red Bull driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands, holds up the trophy on the podium after the Formula One Grand Prix at the Spa-Francorchamps racetrack in Spa, Belgium, Sunday, Aug. 29, 2021. The race was red flagged due to weather conditions. (AP Photo/Francisco Seco)

and ninth overall.

His teammate Sergio Perez appeared to be out of the race before it even started, sliding off the track during

the warmup lap at around 2:30 p.m. and damaging his front suspension.

Red Bull asked race control if Perez could start the

race if they repaired his car in time. The FIA said it was considering the request and later announced Perez would be allowed to start from the pit lane.

At 5 p.m. a further delay was announced.

McLaren's Daniel Ricciardo entertained the fans waiting in the grandstand from the pit lane. In his 200th F1 race, the popular Australian made extravagant hand gestures and waved to them as they chanted "Daniel, Daniel."

"I obviously feel for them," Ricciardo said. "We're in it together but circumstances are out of our control."

It was a poor show for F1 — following some thrilling races this season — but for Russell it was a huge race for his career. □

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If you're looking for a phenomenal dinner experience that has all the ingredients for a wonderful gastronomic night, then you should book at least one night of your stay at Water's Edge Restaurant. Designed to pamper all your senses and cover all of your needs with an amazing staff to attend to your every wish, whether in the fine dining room or under a palapa with your toes in the sand.

Gastronomic journey

Kick start the night with a great, refreshing and most delicious cocktail mixed with concoctions before the grand tour of an extraordinary culinary experience. Start your journey with an exquisite appetizer such as the daily fresh made Water's Edge ceviche or maybe a world known jumbo shrimp cocktail followed by the Chef's special of seafood such as the Spicy Caribbean Seafood pasta, Mahi Mahi or pan fried Red Snapper served with Aruban creole sauce or garlic lemon butter. For the carnivores among us there are choices of 8 ounce seasoned Filet Mignon, 12 ounce Rib Eye steak or a French Rack of Lamb



seasoned and grilled to perfection. With choices of extra sides of fresh asparagus, seasonal vegetables, mashed or baked potatoes, fries or rice and beans. Combine your personal choice with one of the most exclusive wines from the great selection of international wines to compliment your dish. Kids will enjoy every item of the specially compiled kids menu. Vegetarians will enjoy the roasted vegetable pasta tossed in a light butter sauce and topped with freshly shaved parmesan cheese. As desserts the choices are wild. Homemade key lime pie, co-



conut flan served with caramel sauce and whipped cream or a NY cheese cake, chocolate brownie with chocolate sauce vanilla ice cream and whipped cream or a delicious oven fresh carrot cake served with orange sauce and candied pecans. Whether it is the best seafood, steaks, chicken, pasta, or your continental favorites the reasonably priced menu offers a modern twist and features generous portions and Chef's specials.

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Planning a birthday or anniversary dinner? Water's Edges Restaurants gives you the perfect gift. Here, you will receive a nice bottle of champagne to take home with you to extend your experience even further whether on the beach or your own private balcony.

Live entertainment:

Just about every day of the week, there is a different live entertainment by the best local artists for you to enjoy. On Monday & Saturday, Angela Flores, will delight you with her violin. Tuesday, Jean Paul, Saxophonist, will get you moving. On Wednesday's and Sunday's singer Paula Ridderstap will make you sing along to all her tunes. Thursday's and Friday's

guitarist Ricky Thomas will make you find your groove. And also on Sunday's Tico Kock will make you dance away to the sounds of his steel drum. Whether you're in a romantic mood or more in a swinging mood, there is absolutely a night especially for you. In addition, the best happy hour in Aruba happens right here. Water's Edge Restaurant offers three Happy Hours daily (12 noon – 1 pm, 4 pm – 6 pm, with complimentary hors d'oeuvres served by circulating staff, and again from 9 pm – 10 pm) with all premium brands specially priced.

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For more information about the menus, entertainment and hours, please visit the website www.watersedge-aruba.com

